

1976 quarters become targets of hoarders

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to more questions from readers.

Q—Last year I cashed in \$165 worth of “drummer boy quarters” after reading in your column that the coins are common and worth just 25 cents each. Since then I’ve found just five such coins in my pocket change. Why are they suddenly so scarce? Did you miss the call on this one?

R. E., Cicero

A—Bicentennial quarters dated 1776-1976 rarely turn up in circulation because novices are hoarding them by the kettle-full. Uncle Sam made 1.7 billion such coins, the second highest one-year mintage on record for quarters.

Several decades may pass before the coins you spent are worth more than their face value. Meanwhile, your \$165 will double in just a few years if placed in a savings account.

Q—Would you advise us to invest in 1988 coin sets from Great Britain, Canada or the United States? Which type has the greatest short-term profit potential?

P. N., Chicago

A—None of the above. Most experts agree that for every new issue that goes up in price within a year or two, 10 stay the same or go down. Buy the sets for their beauty, not to make a quick profit.

Q—We own two \$1 bills from 1935 with blue serial numbers rather than green numbers as on modern-day paper money. Do the colors have special significance?

C. B., Park Ridge

A—Yes; most types of U.S. currency printed in the last 60 years are color coded. For example, almost all U.S. silver certifi-

cates have blue serial numbers and Treasury seal; Federal Reserve notes, green; United States notes, red; gold certificates, gold; and national bank notes, brown.

Q—Why are old U.S. \$5 gold pieces called “half Eagles”? We own two such coins and the bird shown on each looks full to us.

S. D., Hoffman Estates

A—The name appears in the famous coinage act of 1792, which also declared that a U.S. \$10 gold coin be called an

“Eagle.”

Q—We’ve inherited a fascinating “Treasury Note” of 1890, but the bill shows much dirt and fold marks. How can we clean it?

W. C., Chicago

A—Don’t try! Hobby pros often can improve the appearance of paper money by—among other things—soaking the bill in warm water and rubbing it with mild soap. But novices who try to clean old currency usually do more harm than good.